

HOUSES



EXTERIOR
Huge glazed openings offer views straight through the threshing barn to the cowshed beyond. The smaller structure to the right, once a cart shed, is now used as a potting shed

COUNTRY IDYLL

Interior designer Samantha Todhunter was tasked with making this 17th-century threshing barn a bolthole for enjoying the rural life

WORDS RACHEL LEEHAM PHOTOGRAPHY JONATHAN BOND



Situated on the edge of a Dorset village, this former threshing barn is one of three handsome agricultural buildings that were purchased by the owners of the neighbouring farmhouse to create accommodation and entertaining space for their family and friends. When the couple acquired the Grade II-listed structure, one of its facades was entirely hidden behind a makeshift corrugated iron shed that had been erected between the barns to house more livestock. 'It wasn't until we took it away that we realised that the threshing barn stood on quite a slope, so our first job was to shore it up to prevent it from collapsing,' the owner recalls.

The threshing barn is the oldest of the structures – the 19th-century cowshed featured in the March issue – and it is believed to date back to the late 1600s. 'Its form really spelt out to us how it was going to be used,' recounts the owner, whose architects, Llewellyn Harker Lowe, devised a layout featuring an open-plan ground floor with a kitchen and seating area at either end, each with a bedroom 'pod' above. At the core of the building is an impressive steel-framed, vaulted dining area where the barn's two vast openings are now punctuated with Crittall glazing.

The couple had previously enlisted interior designer Samantha Todhunter to refurbish both their London home and their farmhouse, and for the barns they asked her to help them create relaxed, fun spaces that would appeal to all generations. 'The threshing barn doubles as a party space so it was important to source practical furnishings,' explains Samantha, citing as examples the robust oak dining table and benches and the sofa's white linen-effect fabric designed for outdoor use. 'We've

had 150 people in here so that sofa has seen quite a lot of action, yet it is still pristine,' the owner marvels.

The sitting area's fresh green and white palette and the kitchen's glazed wall cabinets help mitigate the fact that the lower-ceilinged parts of the barn are inevitably darker. Both ends of the room are lit with miniature ship lights that chime with the Crittall glazing of the windows. 'I felt that ordinary downlights would have destroyed some of the organic quality of the building,' explains Samantha, who suggested oversized woven rattan pendants for the dining area to complement the barn's rugged good looks.

The ground floor's huge limestone flags, sourced from the local quarry, particularly resonate with the owner. 'This is where the stone for the barns and our farmhouse would have originally come from so it is incredibly special to us,' she says, adding, 'These slabs come from one of the oldest strata and they are millions of years old; they are peppered with fossils.'

The barns have not only given the owners fun buildings for their family and friends, but they have also hugely enhanced their surroundings: adjoining land has been transformed to include a cutting garden and a vegetable garden, while existing dry stone walls have been painstakingly restored. 'Before, our house was surrounded by a horrible leylandii hedge but when we took it away, we revealed the huge rolling landscape around us,' adds the owner. She continues, 'From every room in our house we now have a different perspective of the pretty barns, the gardens and the valley beyond. It has revolutionised living here.' 📸

■ Samantha Todhunter Design, samanthatodhunter.com; [@samanthatodhunterdesign](https://www.instagram.com/samanthatodhunterdesign)

Llewellyn Harker Lowe, llewellynharker.com

“THE VIEWS ARE AMAZING, SO THEY DICTATED HOW WE
WOULD FURNISH THE SPACE – WE CHOSE BENCHES
RATHER THAN CHAIRS SO AS NOT TO DISTRACT THE EYE”



DINING AREA

Every piece was chosen to complement the organic quality of the building – from the rattan pendants to the reclaimed floorboards on the upper walls.

Aubrey dining table and benches. Oxenwood.

Woven rattan pendant lights. Maisons du Monde





STAIRCASE

Each of the two bedrooms is accessed via a timber staircase. The architects came up with the idea of cladding a section of the walls with reclaimed floorboards from the main house to delineate the bedroom 'pods'. **Building work**, Hammond Building Contractors. **Bench seats and curtains** in Ticking 02, Ian Mankin. **Dome pewter wall lights**, Holloways of Ludlow

SITTING AREA

This uplifting scheme combines all-white furniture with eye-catching green textiles. Textural pieces such as cane chairs and a bulrush tray complement the rugged walls. **Otto corner sofa**, Sofa.com; **covered in** Rough 'n Rowdy, Perennials. **Geometric cushions** in Grandma's Quilt, Anna Spiro Textiles at The Fabric Collective. **Botanical cushions** in Fruiting Fig, Botanica Trading

MEET THE HOMEOWNER

The threshing barn's owner shares her inspiration
GREATEST SUCCESS The amazing light and views created by the huge Crittall glazing and doors in the original barn openings.

BIGGEST INDULGENCE Sam's last-minute, inspired suggestion to use straw-coloured grasscloth on the bedroom walls. Very expensive, but it transformed these two rooms.

GO-TO COLOUR Farrow & Ball's Skylight looks gorgeous in my bedroom.

SECRET ADDRESS Guinevere on the King's Road. Always worth popping in for special pieces.

PIECE YOU WOULD NEVER PART WITH A walnut bureau given to my mother on her 21st birthday by my grandfather.

DESIGN MANTRA Go for comfort and colour, and mix old with new.



BEDROOM

The window looks across to the bedroom at the opposite end of the barn. 'We call these the Romeo and Juliet windows,' quips the owner. Indian-inspired prints and a beautiful glazed lamp add decorative touches. Cushions and blind in Kashmiri in Azure, GP & J Baker. Celine bed linen, Cologne & Cotton. Scalloped lampshade, Vanreenen GW Designs

BEDROOM

Samantha suggested the straw-coloured grasscloth for the walls. 'I am an obsessive grasscloth user and I imagine that the barn was once filled with wheat or corn, so this option felt much more fitting than smooth plaster,' she explains. Extra Fine Arrowroot grasscloth, Phillip Jeffries. Cushions, blind and valance in Seafers, Nicky Haslam Design